

Indicator RECOMMENDED	Early Initiation of Cigarette Use
Justification	<p>More than 400,000 deaths each year are attributed to cigarette smoking, making it the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S. Smoking increases the risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic lung disease. Initiation of cigarette use at young ages, especially in pre-adolescence, has been linked with regular use of cigarettes in adolescence and adulthood. Among adults in the U.S. who ever smoked daily, 82% tried their first cigarette prior to age 18. It is also illegal for youth under the age of 18 to purchase tobacco products</p>
Definition	<p>Percent of students in grades 9 through 12 reporting that they smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13</p>
Data Source	<p>Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</p>
Frequency	<p>Biennial</p>
Geographic Levels	<p>National and State</p>
Demographic Categories	<p>Grade Level, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity</p>
Strengths	<p>This measure may be defined for all respondents, unlike average age of first use, which can only be defined for users. YRBSS is the only national source that currently provides state-level prevalence estimates on early initiation of cigarette use. YRBSS estimates typically are based on larger samples than the National Survey of Drug Use and Health, and can be further broken down by grade level, gender, and race/ethnicity. Some states also collect YRBSS data for individual communities or school districts, which can be compared with their state-level data.</p>
Limitations	<p>Cut-point of 13 years may not be sensitive to changes in average age of first use across the age continuum. As of 2003, weighted representative samples were only available for 32 states. Not all states participate, and some participating states do not provide representative samples. YRBSS is a school-based survey, so students who have dropped out of school are not represented. It is also subject to bias due to self-report, non-coverage (refusal by selected schools to participate), and non-response (refusal/no answer). Estimates for some demographic subgroups may have relatively low precision (i.e., large confidence intervals).</p>